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TAGS: PREL KCOR PGOV PHUM MZ  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT GUEBUZA HIGHLIGHTS HIV/AIDS AT  
NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

¶1. (U) During the recent opening session of a National Youth Conference on HIV/AIDS, President Armando Guebuza and Prime Minister Luisa Diogo encouraged young Mozambicans to take the lead in the country's fight against HIV/AIDS. The three-day meeting was organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the National Youth Council, and the National AIDS Council and included 500 youths from around the country to discuss behavior and attitude change. Guebuza noted the significant effect the disease has had on the country's youth and young adults, a subgroup that continues to have the highest prevalence rates in the country. He also acknowledged that government efforts to combat the disease have not been sufficient to make a difference.

¶2. (U) Guebuza continued to parallel the impact of HIV/AIDS with his administration's top focus - the overall fight against poverty. Unlike in past speeches, however, Guebuza did not actively encourage attendees to be tested for the disease and made only a passing reference to the prevailing atmosphere of stigma and discrimination against those infected with HIV/AIDS. Diogo's message focused primarily on behavior change. She argued that youth can no longer stand by idly and wait for others to solve their problems and stressed that young Mozambicans must find the will to change their own behavior and actively encourage change among their partners and peers.

¶3. (U) COMMENT: The fact that senior level GRM officials again mentioned HIV/AIDS in well-publicized speeches is a positive demonstration of the GRM's commitment to combat this epidemic. However, the speeches represented the first high-level statement by the GRM on HIV/AIDS in the past three months. First Lady Maria da Luz Guebuza who had declared HIV/AIDS awareness to be a cornerstone of her office was also conspicuously absent from the proceedings. While the GRM remains very cooperative on the programmatic level, we will continue to encourage more visible leadership from Mozambique's senior political leaders, which will be crucial in reversing the still-rising incidence rate of HIV/AIDS among Mozambique's adult population.  
END COMMENT

